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The Narrative Technique of John Masefield's Longer Poems

Submitted by

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An Outline of

- The Narrative Technique of

John Masefield's Longer Poems -

-The Narrative Technique of

John Masefield's Longer Poems-

I - Foreword.

A-Brief statement of the material to be covered.

1-Introduction-

a. Influence of his life on his work.

2-John Masefield's Literary Technique

a. General Narrative Technique

b. Treatment of Setting

c. Character delineation

d. Point of View

e. Poetical Style or Technique

3-Conclusion

II - Introduction

A-John Masefield - the writer

1-General characteristics

a. Effect and limitations of environment

b. Versatility of Masefield

(1) Ability

(2) Scope

(3) Interest and recognition accorded

2-Masefield's Poems and the Poetic Principle

III - John Masefield's Narrative Technique.

A-General Narrative Technique.

1-Choice of subject - elemental.

a. Poems deal with the mental struggle of human beings or animals against the elemental forces.

Examples - The Dauber

Reynard the Fox

The Widow in the Bye Street

Right Royal

Enslaved

Daffodil Fields.

2-Plot Development.

a. Story built around a slim incidental plot.

Examples - Right Royal

Daffodil Fields

The Dauber

The Widow in the Bye Street

b. Order of Narration

(1) Preference given to chronological order.

Examples - Reynard the Fox

The Everlasting Mercy

Enslaved

Exception - The Dauber

c. Dramatic Foreshadowing

(1) Verses serving as Finger Posts

Example - The Everlasting Mercy

(2) Use of series for dramatic emphasis

Example - The Widow in the Bye Street

(3) Direct prophecy

Examples- Rosas

Right Royal

(a) Forecasts future for minor characters -

Example - Reynard the Fox.

d. Lack of Continuity.

(1) Unity of effect lost through the insertion of verses which represent the author's own philosophy of life.

(a) Effect slightly didactic

Examples - Rosas
The Widow in the Bye Street
The Dauber
The Everlasting Mercy.

(2) Heightens suspense by descriptions of nature which delay the plot.

Example - The Everlasting Mercy.

3 - Treatment of conclusion

a. Failure to recognize the logical end of poem.

Example - The Everlasting Mercy

b. Failure to bring story to a logical conclusion.

Examples - Rosas
Enslaved
Daffodil Field

c. Surprise Endings -

Examples - Reynard the Fox
The Dauber

B-Treatment of Setting.

1-Masefield - "the painter of words."

a. Creates a definite mental image of the unfamiliar by the use of figures of speech.

b. Descriptive passages reminiscent of Homer's and Turner's paintings.

Example - The Dauber

c. Estimation of the value of Masefield's Settings.

2- Setting used as an aid to action

a. Influence of Hardy

Example - Daffodil Fields

3- Masefield's Locale Settings.

a. Attempt to preserve the traditionary lore of the English countryside.

b. Influence of Chaucer

Examples - Reynard the Fox
Right Royal
King Cole

c. The Locale in other poems

Examples - The Daffodil Fields
The Widow in the Bye Street
The Dauber

d. Value of the locale settings.

4-Masefield and the "pathetic fallacy."

a. Although Masefield ignores it, the offense is warranted.

Examples - Right Royal
The Dauber
The Everlasting Mercy

5-Emotional harmony.

a. Recognition of emotional harmony between setting and theme of the story.

Examples - Reynard the Fox

Right Royal

King Cole

Exceptions found in -

The Everlasting Mercy

Daffodil Fields

The Widow in the Bye Street

6-Realistic not Romantic

a. Realistic in choice of theme and scene

b. Romantic in treatment of idealism

c. Masefield's criticism of Tennyson

d. Masefield's purpose as a writer

C-Character Development and Origins.

1-General delineation of characters.

a. Success in the representation of given types.

2-Presentation of characters.

a. Major characters well defined individuals

Examples - Saul Kane-The Everlasting Mercy

The Widow-The Widow in the Bye Street

b. Minor characters are clear types with individual personalities

Examples - Old Bennet-Reynard the Fox

The parson's wife-Reynard the Fox

The parson-Reynard the Fox

The stable boy-Reynard the Fox

Dick Cappell-Right Royal

3-Masefield's treatment of dialogue.

a. Conveys the idea of dialect through characteristic expressions.

b. Tendency towards "the closet drama" in desire to obtain a dramatic effect.

4-Kinetic characters -

a. Male characters are Kinetic or developing characters.

Examples - Saul Kane-Everlasting Mercy

The Dauber-The Dauber

Rosas-Rosas

Jimmy-The Widow in the Bye Street

b. Rosas - a symbolic character

c. Female characters are less life-like

(1) Fail to be consistent and convincing

Example - Mary in The Daffodil Fields

5-Static characters.

a. Major female characters are not life-like

b. Minor female characters are more life-like

Examples - Mrs. Jaggard-The Everlasting Mercy

Miss Bourne-The Everlasting Mercy

c. Slight tendency towards sentimentalism in Masefield's treatment of women

Examples - Mary - The Daffodil Fields

The Widow-The Widow in the Bye Street

Amy - Enslaved

6-Direct Delineation -

a. Masefield presents his characters directly to his readers

Examples - The Dauber
Everlasting Mercy
The Daffodil Fields

b. Presentation by personalities

Examples - Reynard the Fox
Right Royal
King Cole

c. Portrayal through action

Examples - Everlasting Mercy
Reynard the Fox

7-Indirect Delineation -

a. Presents characters through the reports of others.

Examples - The Widow in the Bye Street
The Dauber

b. The effect of one character upon another

Examples - The Dauber
The Widow in the Bye Street
The Everlasting Mercy

8-Influence of Environment

a. Masefield's characters the product of their environment.

Examples - Daffodil Fields
The Dauber
Rosas

9-King Cole - an allegorical character

a. Explanation of King Cole as "deux - ex - machina."

Example - King Cole

10-Character group background

a. Few major characters

b. Crowd grouped in the background resemble a series of individual but related pictures.

Examples - Reynard the Fox

Right Royal

King Cole

D-Point of View.

1-Variable approach

a. Prefers the third person but changes point of view readily to suit the scene, character, or plot.

2-The Internal Point of View.

a. Stories told from hero's point of view.

Examples - Saul Kane - Everlasting Mercy

Enslaved

b. Story told by various characters.

Examples - The Widow in the Bye Street

The Dauber

3-The External Point of View.

a. Omniscient point of View

Example - Reynard the Fox

b. Limited Viewpoint

Example - Daffodil Fields

c. Author telling his own story

Examples - Reynard the Fox

Rosas

4-Masefield's tone personal

a. This personal quality gives an added charm to the poems.

E-Masefield's Poetical Technique.

1-Style -

a. Masefield's greatest charm is found in his descriptive Power and Style.

b. Tendency to neglect to revise his work.

Example - Rosas

c. Style improved in his recent poems.

Example - Midsummer Night and other Tales.

2-Masefield's Technique

a. Poems may be read at one sitting

b. Plots are of minor importance

c. Poetical limitations hamper his style

d. Poetry "simple, sensuous, and passionate"

e. Poetical theory.

f. Masefield's motive in writing poetry.

III - Conclusion

A-Masefield a versatile writer

1-Shows influence of the older poets

a. Probable effect on coming narrative technique poetry

2-Failure to observe technical rules

a. Prefers to develop his own individuality

3-Universality of poems insures Masefield a permanent position in literature

4-Realist in selection of material but romanticist in treatment.

5-The Everlasting Mercy and The Dauber his best poems from the angle of Narrative Technique.

6-Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and King Cole are locale poems.

7-Characters well depicted but not sufficiently motivated.

8-Masefield's greatest fault is his failure to recognize the logical ending of the poem.

a. Insertion of philosophical remarks which break the continuity of the poem.

9-Masefield is a dramatic poet.

a. Certain poems resemble closet dramas.

b. Use of foreshadowing.

10-Masefield is, though not didactic, moralistic.

11-Masefield's philosophy of life.

The Narrative Technique of John Masefield's Longer Poems

The Narrative Technique of

John Masefield's Longer Poems.

I. Foreword

John Masefield, England's newly appointed poet laureate, has a distinct literary technique which is not apparent until the reader carefully analyzes his poems. I intend, therefore, to review briefly John Masefield--the author--first, and then analyze his narrative poems from the standpoint of literary narrative technique.

It is essential to review his life because it has influenced his narratives to such a degree that the two cannot be separated easily.

"Many times a close adherence to actuality is as advisable for the deductive author as it is for the inductive. Many times the romantic writer gains as much as the realist by confining his fiction to his own environment of time and place. More and more in recent years, the romantics have followed the lead of the realist in embodying their truth in scenes and characters imitated from actuality". (1).

This is especially true of Masefield's choice attitude towards his narrative poems. The two cannot be separated, for he has woven his life's experiences into his work.

(1). Clayton Hamilton-A Manual of the Art of Fiction Pg. 38-39.

After having briefly sketched his life, I shall proceed with the more common phases of Literary Technique, Plot development, treatment of Setting, Character delineation, the Point of View from which he tells his story, and finally I shall comment briefly upon Masefield's Poetical Technique.

II. Introduction.

John Masefield is one of our modern representative poets, and therefore, has not as yet been definitely accorded an established position in Literature, but as John Drinkwater while speaking of John Masefield says in The Muse in Council: "There is one kind of poetry which if we care for at all, we care always. In its nature it may conceivably be said that it is not of the very rarest attar, that it never quite touches the supreme wonder of phrase that is the last delight of poetry. It is the poetry that takes into its processes great vistas of humanity with their background".

This is true, because Masefield's life has been so varied that it has given him an almost universal outlook upon humanity, thereby enabling him to present characters which live, situations which are real, and settings which are so vividly described that the reader can understand the unfamiliar. Roy L. French in Recent Poetry has practically accounted for Masefield's success by saying: "Masefield shows everywhere a sympathetic understanding of ordinary people, a love of the open, and the frank speech of a vigorous man, all expressed in a swinging rhythm".

It is this "sympathetic understanding" which has appealed to the readers of John Masefield. Undoubtedly Masefield's "swinging rhythm" has helped him also, for many authors fail in their attempt to present the lives

of ordinary people because of their unnatural style. But Masefield is fortunate, for his style is adapted to his narratives. It delights the mind, pleases the ear, and satisfies the reader. I have seen high school students, boys especially, who dislike poetry, sit enthralled when the storm at sea described in The Dauber was read to them and sigh regretfully when the class bell rang. Yet many of them had had no actual experience with the sea, and some few had never seen it!

Masefield is very versatile and is equally at home in prose or verse. (1). "His dramas have been successfully produced and they range from the classical solemnity of Pompey the Great to the more racy Tragedy of Nan. His novels are outstanding especially Sard Harker, (1924)". Masefield has also won recognition through his ballads. Of course, his sea ballads are the most popular and are famed for their beauty, but perhaps his best known ballad is the one which is founded on the traditionary lore surrounding Saint Withiel. Of this, John Gould Fletcher in The North American Review says: "Hounds of Hell is a fine ballad and worthy of a place beside The Ancient Mariner of Coleridge".

However, it is not this phase of his work which I desire to criticize, for it is his narrative poems which have won Masefield a recognition which promises to be permanent.

(1). Louis Untermeyer--Modern British Poetry.

Many of these poems are the result of personal experiences and are original in treatment and subject.(1). "Mr. Masefield comes like a flash of light across contemporary English poetry. The improbable has been accomplished; he has made poetry out of the very material that has refused to yield it for almost a score of years". Not only has he made poetry, but he has made stories as well!

It is impossible to treat these poems from the standpoint of narrative technique unless one first considers Masefield's life. His range of subjects is broad, for he uses his own experiences as a background, and he succeeds in presenting his themes so clearly that their universality or truth is apparent.

Masefield was born in the small town of Ledbury in western England in 1878. Although his father was a lawyer, Masefield spent the greater part of his boyhood on a small farm where he read a great deal. Tiring of this life at the age of fourteen he was indentured as a cabin boy on the "Conway". He had left home to seek his fortune and observe life! When he was seventeen, he was working as a third assistant bookkeeper in Luke O'Connor's saloon in the Columbia Hotel at New York City; and still later he was working in a carpet factory in Bronx. Here he met Mr. Booth who later aided him to make his way. These adventures with society's lower strata proved to be a

(1). Boston Transcript.

veritable grist for Masefield's literary background. When he returned to England some years later, they furnished him not only with the plots but the characters and settings, for Masefield had observed life keenly and remembered these experiences.

Perhaps his own boyish wish for adventure is expressed in The Daffodil Fields by Michael when he leaves home:

(1).

"And I have had enough of them, and now
I make an end of them. I want to go
Somewhere where man has never used a plow
Nor ever read a book, where the clean winds blow.
And passionate blood is not its owner's foe
And land is for the asking for it. There
Man can create a life and have the open air".

An almost similar sentiment is expressed in The Dauber describing the call of the sea and the Dauber's desire to paint it.

(2).

"Down below the bridge where the docks begin
And there I saw a clipper towing through,
Up from the sea that morning--entering in,

And when I felt unhappy I would look
Over the river at her, and her pride,
So calm, so quiet, came as a rebuke
To half the passionate pathways which I tried.

Then on a day she sailed, but when she went,

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg.288.
(2).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 232-233.

My mind was clear on what I had to try:
To see the sea and ships and what they meant,
That was the thing I longed to do; so I
Drew and worked hard, and studied and put by,
And thought of nothing else but that one end,
But let all else go hang--love--money--friend,
And now I've shipped as Dauber, I've begun".

Some such urge must have lured Masefield away on his adventures. Perhaps he was thinking of his own mother's influence when he related the Dauber's story. Certain it is that Masefield's relatives, with the exception of his mother, failed to understand him.

Masefield, therefore, as a poet is unusual, for he has actually lived his stories. This accounts for the spontaneity of manner and the biographical treatment found in his poetry. The Dauber is, of course, the best example.

Besides being biographical in tone, The Dauber is one of the few marine poems which has a recognized intrinsic value. The Everlasting Mercy is also biographical in tone. It is the account of one Saul Kane, obviously a label name, whose story takes us from the depth of Hell to the gates of Heaven. His narrative poems are not all based upon his travels, for some deal with the tranquil life of rural England. This is especially true of the slightly pastoral poem, reminiscent of Chaucer, Reynard the Fox which presents a clear picture of the English hunt meet. Then again, Right Royal, though not as good as the former, presents another phase of English life--the steeple chase.

Still another is King Cole which pictures an interesting cross section of the travelling circus' life.

Masefield's ability rests on his descriptive powers and his vigorous style which at times is dramatic. His plots do not dominate the story. In Right Royal, for example, the plot seems of almost secondary importance. It is the characterizations and the settings which furnish the main interest for the reader.

Although his narratives remind one of short stories in length, I do not believe that Edgar Allan Poe would be satisfied with them. Masefield's narrative poems do not agree with Poe's theories as originally stated in "Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales", (1842), now generally accepted as the criteria for the short story. Even though the poems may be read at one sitting and rarely take more than an hour for the average reading, still they lack a singleness of effect; and as the initial sentence is not apt to create the required atmosphere of the poem, Poe would claim that the totality of effect was lost through the introduction of irrevelant material. But Masefield's scope is broad, and his theme ranges from the peaceful English countryside to the sea with its towering clipper to the lowest gambling dives of the cheap city slum. If, as Clayton Hamilton says: "Truthfulness is the only title to Immortality, and it is only by adhering rigorously to the truth that fiction can survive", then Masefield becomes Immortal and geniuses are exempt from pedagogue's rules.

(1). Clayton Hamilton--A Manual of Art and Fiction
Page 17.

Much interest has of late been accorded Masefield's work--not alone to his narrative poems, his lyrics, his dramas, his novels, and ballads, but to his versatility which seems to promise him a definite position in literature.

As Masefield says in the introduction to Volume I of his Collected Poems, "There is the native school of poets which has qualities of character drawing, humor, liveliness, and truth; and whatever their shortcomings, these poets have been in the school of life instead of the school of artifice. However harshly the next school may treat them, that school must be a little livelier for their efforts".

III. The Narrative Technique of John Masefield's Longer Poems.

A. The general technique of John Masefield's Longer Poems.

Choice of Subject--Elemental.

As I have already indicated, John Masefield's selection of subject is broad and not confined to any one phase of life. He deals with all. In his choice of subject Masefield is undeniably a realist, for his poems deal with the mental struggle of human beings or animals against the elemental forces of nature and society's code. In The Dauber, (1911), the hero is struggling against the rigors of sea life. Unfortunately, though, after the Dauber has conquered self and become a man, the very force which has made him one causes him to fail--for it brings him Death just after the ship has apparently passed through the danger safely.

(1).
"The mate gazed hard to the windward, eyed his sail,
And said The Horn was going to flick her tail".

The struggle in Reynard the Fox represents the cunning fox outwitting the hunters through his familiarity with the Ghost Heath Run. Another example is The Widow in the Bye Street which sometimes seems to sink into a bathos of sentimentalism, and is founded upon the struggle of a mother to keep her son away from the wiles of the village prostitute. Of course, she fails because Anna is beautiful to look at, and her son has no desire to break with her even though it causes the undoing of all three.

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Page 263.

In Right Royal, the horse overcomes self, the slippery muddy race course, and wins the stakes from apparently better and more experienced horses. Enslaved represents the mental superiority of a Christian slave over a Moorish Khalif and the subsequent escape of the Christians through Gerard's verbal victory. The Daffodil Fields describes the struggle of environment and heredity against duty.

I have selected these six examples as typical struggles of Masefield's characters to overcome the elemental. The Dauber represents the struggle of man to command the sea. Reynard the Fox represents the spirit of the chase, and because the fox escapes, he becomes the actual hero of the poem. The Widow in the Bye Street represents the elemental lust of man after the elemental woman. Right Royal presents the conquering of self and the overcoming of obstacles. Enslaved pictures the value of mental freedom over bodily freedom. The Daffodil Fields indirectly shows the consequence of forgetting duty when personal desire is the ruling passion. This elemental background is ever present in Masefield's poems; but as Louis Untermeyer says when speaking of John Masefield's poetry as a whole, "Possibly Masefield overemphasized the passion and brutality, but underneath the violence he captured that highly colored realism which is the poetry of life, for these works have that peculiar kind of physical exulting and spiritual exultation that is typical of Masefield and the very rudeness is lifted to a plane of religious intensity".

Plot Development

The plot is not always the dominant feature of the poem. In Right Royal it seems as though it were merely

an excuse for an otherwise long descriptive poem of a steeple chase. The stem plot consists of the hero betting "his all" because of a dream, on his pet horse at the coming race. He has dreamt that Right Royal, a horse who has never won a race because of his stubborn temperament, will win the prize and thereby bring his master health, wealth, and happiness through an early marriage. Barely three pages are devoted to the basic theme while some fifty-seven pages are occupied with the account of the race.

This is not a typical poem, for usually the plot is more emphasized and developed. In Daffodil Fields, the plot is better grounded, but the method of treatment is rambling. The scene shifts from the Daffodil fields of England to the grasslands of Brazil and back again to England. The tale is of the wandering Michael--a black sheep--and his subsequent return to his native land. The poem would certainly be greater if the locality were more restricted and the plot more concentrated. In this respect Right Royal excels The Daffodil Fields for at least its setting is restricted.

The plot in The Dauber is an essential part of the poem. Joe wants to learn to paint the sea and so becomes "the Dauber". He develops into an able seaman and forgets his artistic aspirations. The ship successfully weathers the Cape Horn storms, but in spite of this Death claims the Dauber.

In The Widow in the Bye Street the central interest is the plot; it represents the struggle between the two

contending forces and Jimmy is the game.

The Dauber and The Widow in the Bye Street are typical examples, for they have a restricted locale and the plot furnishes the central motive.

Order of Narration.

Masefield on the whole seems to prefer the chronological order of events when telling stories. Reynard the Fox begins with the dawn of the morning of the hunt, the gathering of the hunters, the chatter of the stable boys, and then after this introduction the story of the chase follows in direct order.

The Everlasting Mercy begins with a brief introduction telling us of Saul Kane's first thirty years and then starts directly with the story of the boxing match, and so on through the night's adventures until Saul's reform which was predicted in the first stanza.

(1)"From '41 to '51.
I was my folk's contrary son,
I bit my father's hand right through
And broke my mother's heart in two
I sometimes go without my dinner
Now that I know the times I've giv'n her".

Enslaved is also told in chronological order. It is the tale of a lover who finds his sweetheart's home in ashes and is told by a dying servant of her capture by the Moors. The lover, because he cannot ransom her, becomes a slave on the galley. He plans an escape and thanks to Gerard, a fellow captive, he succeeds.

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 345.

Although the chronological order is the usual order of Masefield's poems there is one which proves the exception. This is The Dauber. The Dauber is told in epic order. The poem begins directly with an account of the despised Dauber's adventure at sea, and it isn't until the Dauber has become accustomed to sea life that he narrates his boyhood tale one rainy day on deck to the reefer, Si.
(1).

"Glorious northers shouting out a psalm
At seeing the bright blue water silver fleeced;
Hornwards she rushed, trampling seas to yeast,
There fell a rain-----squall in a blind day's end
When for an hour the Dauber found a friend.
Under the poop-break sheltering from the rain,
The Dauber sketched some likeness of the room,
A note to be a prompting to his brain.
A spark to make old memory re-illume,
"Dauber", said someone near him in the gloom,
How goes it Dauber?" It was the reefer, Si,
"There's not much use in trying to keep dry".

Si said the Horn was still some weeks away.
"But tell me, Dauber, when d'you hail from? Eh?"

The Dauber proceeds to tell Si his story, but Si goes to sleep and the Dauber tells it to the reader instead. This brief introduction furnishes the background for the third canto which is, therefore, expository in style.

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 224.

Dramatic foreshadowing.

While reading Masefield's poems, one cannot fail to notice the dramatic foreshadowing of events. Sometimes there are only a few verses, but they serve as finger posts to the story. Other poems contain stanzas, while another contains a dramatic series which completely foreshadows the movements of the characters. One example I have already mentioned--Saul Kane's reform which is suggested in the first stanza of the poem. There is a more pointed one in the sixth stanza just at the close of the introduction, when Saul Kane says, after having mentioned that "nineteen times he went to goal"--
(1).

"Now, friends, observe and look on me,
Mark how the Lord took pity on me
By Dead Man's Thorn while setting wires".

Masefield then proceeds to narrate the story of Saul Kane's adventures but the reader is prepared for the reform which concludes the poem.

Perhaps the most striking example is the dramatic series which is found in The Widow in the Bye Street foretelling Jimmy's downfall. The first comes just after the happiness of the mother in her now almost mature son has been described.
(2).
"And all the time Fate had his end prepared."

This does not seem very pointed, but after the four principle characters have been described, the following verses bind the fates of the four together.
(3).
"So the four souls are ranged, the chess board set.
The dark invisible hand of secret Fate

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 846.
(2). " " " Vol. I. Pg. 149.
(3). " " " Vol. I. Pg. 152.

Brought it to come to being that they meet
After so many years of lying in wait
While we least think it he prepares his Mate.
Mate and the King's pawn played, it never ceases
Though all the earth is dust of taken pieces".

The characters have not as yet met, but "the chess board is set", so that in the second canto when they do meet the reader is prepared for the result.

(1).
"When Life knocks at the door no one can wait,
When Death makes his arrest we have to go.
And so with Love, and Jimmy found it so."

Jimmy has seen Anna and Death is about to make his arrest. Jimmy, his mother, and Anna go to "the King" for a cup of tea and Death starts knitting Jimmy's shroud.

(2).
"And Jimmy's heart blood ticking quick and loud,
And Death beside him knitting at the the shroud
And all High Street babbling with the fair
And white October clouds in the blue air."

But only the reader knows what is happening to Jimmy, for everyone else has his attention centered on the Fair. A few stanzas later, when the day is ending, the following verses convince the reader that Jimmy's downfall is now only a question of time.

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 156.
(2). " " " Vol. I. Pg. 157.

(1).
"And Death stopped knitting at the muffling band,
"The shroud is done", he muttered, "toe to chin",
He snapped the ends and tucked the needles in".

The game is almost finished, when in Part Five just after Jimmy has lost his job in the mines and has realized at last that Anna was playing with him, we find two references. The first is the awakening of the desire in Jimmy's befuddled brain to kill his favored rival--

(2).
"It was his ace, but Death had played a trump,
Death, the blind beggar, chuckled, nodding dumb,
"My game, the shroud is ready Jimmy come."

And so Jimmy goes to Anna's cottage to get his costly revenge.

The last reference occurs when his mother, with whom he has quarreled, tries to find her son. Upon learning that Jimmy has lost his job and gone to the pub, she feels secure, for she is confident that Anna will "throw him over". The sorrowing mother decides to go home and wait for Jimmy's return. This is an error and the reader realizes it because the following verses all too plainly foretell the end.

(3).
"Brother Life, you loose", said Brother Death,
"Even as the Lord appointed hath
In this great miracle of blood and breath".

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 159.
(2). " " " Vol. I. Pg. 192.
(3). " " " Vol. I. Pg. 194.

These seven inferences show how by means of dramatic foreshadowing Masefield has created a chain of evidences which introduce an element of suspense and tension. It would have been impossible for Masefield to have obtained this effect in any other way, for they heighten the dramatic force and prepare the reader for the conclusion. Although each one serves a distinct purpose and helps to bring out a concentration of motives, still, I rather feel that the dramatic emphasis would be just as great if there were fewer in the series.

The future is similarly forecasted in Rosas, but in this poem, it takes the form of a direct prophecy. Lord Rosas looks at his grandson and says in the fourth stanza when asked why he weeps--

(1).
"Because I see round that child's head
A sign of evil things that will betide
Through him, being man--There is a blur of red,
A blur of blood, a devil at his side
I see his future, that is why I cried."

Then in speaking of his mother's training of the fatherless boy Masefield says:

(2).
"Some few short years, some bitter bouts they had
That old hot proud un-understanding one
Roused night and day the devil in the lad,
She with her plans and he with all his dreams
Of the great world washed by the ocean streams."

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems-Vol. I Pg. 425.
(2) " " " Vol. I.Pg. 426.

These few verses conclude the prelude to Rosas, and from there the tale follows in direct chronological order. The careful reader can easily foretell what the young lad's future will be, even though the actual incidents are concealed.

In Right Royal the foreshadowing is not so plausible. It is based on Charles Cothill's dream, and his imaginary conversation the next morning with his horse, Right Royal. Dreams are such unreliable omens!

Not only does Masefield forecast the future for his major characters, but he is inclined to prophecy the future for his minor characters. This is not always warranted, for it requires a knowledge which is greater than the immediate story requires and it also delays the action. In Reynard the Fox such an example occurs. When Polly Colway comes to the hunt, Masefield remarks--

(1).
"Poor, pretty Polly Colway's hair,
The grey mare killed her at the brook
Down Seven Spring's Mead at Water Hook
Just one month later, poor sweet woman."

This is really unnecessary, for the reader is interested primarily in that day's hunt, not that of a "month later". Not content with the tale of Polly Colway, Masefield shows how Polly's death affects the life of her fiance. These confidences are misplaced and really have no bearing on the Ghost Heath Run.

Lack of Continuity.

Not only is Masefield inclined to insert prophecies,

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. II. Pg. 16.

but he breaks the development of the theme by the insertion of verses which seem to represent his own philosophy of life. Sometimes they are warranted, but often they seem apart from the central theme and annoy the reader because he is interested in the story and not in the author's ideas. Masefield's purpose is to increase the suspense, add to the dramatic effect, and force a contrast of values. On the whole he succeeds, but occasionally the reader is not interested in Masefield's philosophy. In Rosas, when the daughter is about to elope with the priest because she is being forced to marry another, Masefield philosophizes and says:

(1).
"Love plays for life, love stakes upon the cost,
Love is both blind, and brave love only knows
Beauty in the night, a little flame that blows."

The reader is not apt at such a time to be interested in Masefield's attitude towards love; he would prefer to hear more about the eloping lovers and resents the delayed action.

Another similar example occurs in The Widow in the Bye Street after Anna has just succeeded in winning Jimmy's admiration.

(2).
"Love is a flame to burn out human wills,
Love is a flame to set the will on fire,
Love is a flame to cheat men into mire,
One of the three--we make Love what we choose."

This is slightly more acceptable to the reader for the action is closed by this quotation.

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 439
(2). " " " " " 163-164

An additional quotation, which is taken from The Dauber is also objectionable to the reader. Joe has just fallen from the mast to the deck, and as he dies, Masefield remarks:

(1).
"In many ways Death puts us in a pen."

Masefield then continues his description of the other reefers, but for the moment, the effect has been lost.

Here is one selected from The Everlasting Mercy. It seems unwarranted. Just before the boxing match Saul thinks he would gladly give up the bout were it not for what his friends who had backed him might say. Masefield philosophizes saying:

(2).
"Oh Lord, the sin done for the thing there's
money in."

Another reference is pure poetry and almost didactic. It is Saul's explanation why he spared the parson's window after breaking every other window in town, all because he'd given Saul an orange once, when Saul was little.

(3).
"And he who gives a child a treat,
Makes joybells ring in Heaven's street,
And he who give a child a home
Builds palaces in Kingdom Come,
And she who gives a baby birth
Brings Saviour Christ again to Earth.
For life is joy, and mind is fruit,
And body's precious earth and root."

(1). Masefield's Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 267.
(2). " " " " " 247.
(3). " " " " " 68.

Masefield hopes to prove to us that there is still some good left in the drunken Saul, but it seems rather exaggerated sentiment. However, when Masefield gives us Saul's criticism of Mr. Jaggard's discipline, the reader is more convinced of Saul's goodness. He has found little Jimmy crying because he has lost his mother in the crowd and fears the coming punishment from mother's whip. Saul very humbly says:

(1).
"Lord give to men who are old and rougher
The things that little children suffer,
And let keep bright and undefiled
The young years of a little child."

Saul then proceeds to share the poached pear with the child and tells him a story. The reader is surprised to find so much gentleness in the loafer who a little while ago wakened the whole town by ringing the fire bells long and lustily.

The result of such passages is, of course, didactic and moralistic, but Masefield on the whole does not impress the reader as being moralistic even though there is a distinct tendency towards ~~it~~ moralism.

Not only does Masefield insert philosophical passages into the midst of his account of dramatic incidents but he quite frequently inserts long descriptions of nature which serve to heighten the suspense and increase the emphasis. They are like lulls in the storm! In The Everlasting Mercy,

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 77.

we find the following passage which not only has a distinct poetical value, but shows the active imagination of the poet. Saul is just returning victorious to the Lion with his cronies from the boxing bout and is about to spend his ill-gotten purse of gold. Masefield describes the town as Saul sees it. The whole description slows down the tempo of the poem, but it brings a refreshing calm to the reader and relaxes the tension, thereby paving the way for the next exciting incident.

(1).
"The moonlight shown on Cabbage Walk,
It made the limestone look like chalk.
It was too late for any people,
Twelve struck as we went by the steeple.
A dog barked and an owl was calling,
The squire's brook was still a-falling,
The carved heads on the church looked down
On "Russell Blacksmith of this Town."
And all the graves of all the ghosts
Who rise on Christmas Eve in hosts
To dance and carol in festivity
For joy of Jesus Christ's Nativity
(Bell-ringer Dawe and his two sons,
Beheld 'em from the bell tower once,)
Two and two about about,
Singing the end of the Advent out,
Dwindling down to windlestraws
When the glittering peacock craws,
As craw the glittering peacock should
When Christ's own star comes over the wood,

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 53.

Lamb of the sky come out of fold
Wandering windy heavens cold.
So they shone and sang till twelve,
When all the bells ring out theirselve.
Rang a peal for Christmas morn,
Glory, men, for Christ is born."

The dancing of the ghosts is certainly quite a change from the very vivid description of the boxing match. Masefield convinces the reader in a very clever way of its plausibility by stating his proof that "Bell-ringer Dawe and his two sons beheld 'em from the bell tower once." Certainly this is conclusive evidence! Then a little later comes this passage--

(1).
"Down in the lane so thin and dark
The curate's pigeons gave a flutter,
A cat went courting down the gutter
And none else stirred a foot or feather.
The houses put their heads to-gether,
Talking, perhaps so dark and sly
Of all the folk they'd seen go by,
Children, and men, and women, merry all
Who'd some day pass that way to burial."

This quotation shows Masefield's descriptive power and his active imagination. It has served two purposes--it has lessened the tension from the vividly described boxing match and given the reader a brief respite before the description of revellers' celebration. The next descriptive

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 55.

passage comes when the men are all drunkenly asleep after their carousal--only Saul Kane is mentally alert after, "the three long hours of gin and smoke." He still craves action.

(1).
"And I got up; I wanted air.
I opened the window wide and leaned
Out of that pigstye of the fiend
And felt the wind go like a grace
About the sleeping market place.
The clock struck three, and sweetly slowly,
The bells chimed Holy, Holy, Holy."

Then comes the birth of his soul's awakening with the thought--

(2).
"If this life's all the beasts are better"--

but with that thought comes the desire to wake the sleeping town, and Saul is off for his night's adventures. The little peaceful description has saved it from becoming sordid and incidentally has helped to heighten the effect of the following scene. Again Masefield interrupts the action of the story to describe the sky as Saul's hectic day is ending.

(3).
"Jane wasn't where we'd planned--the jade,
She'd thought me drunk and hadn't stayed.
So I went up the walk to look for her
And lingered by the little brook for her,
And doused my face, and drank at spring,

(1). Masefield -- Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 60-61.
(2). " " " " " 61.
(3). " " " " " 76.

And watched the wild duck on the wing.
The moon came pale, the wind came cool,
A big Pike leapt in the Lower Pool.
The Peacock screamed, the clouds were straking,
My cut cheek felt the weather breaking;
An orange sunset waned and thinned
Foretelling rain and western wind,
And while I watched, I heard distinct
The metal on the railway clinked.
The blood-edged clouds were all in tatters,
The sky and earth seemed mad as hatters;
They had a death look wild and odd
Of something dark fore-told by God."

The purpose of these descriptive passages is for emphasis as it helps to build up dramatic climaxes. In The Everlasting Mercy, we find Saul Kane has a wonderful time waking up the sleeping town by ringing the fire bells, misdirecting the engines, taking the brass nozzles from the hose, and breaking the windows, scoffing at the parson; and actually insulting Miss Bourne, the Friend, who finally succeeds in reforming him. All this is told with a forceful vigor which carries a definite movement; then comes a lull with a descriptive passage and a regathering of forces which makes The Everlasting Mercy one of the most vivid poems ever written. It is small wonder that it won the Edmond de Polignac prize 1912!

(1).
"Masefield's poetry is of a curiously uneven texture,

(1). Drinkwater-Canby-Benet--Twentieth Century Poetry.

few poets of anything like his power have been capable of such startling lapses, but no poet of our time has more frequently achieved passages and whole poems of such flawless beauty." It seems to be characteristic of Masefield that while he has a distinct dramatic power, he puts the rising action into such clear diction that the sheer force of the description makes a distinct appeal to his reader.

Treatment of Conclusion

One weakness which mars Masefield's poetry is his failure to recognize the logical conclusion. There is a tendency to prolong the ending, thereby weakening the effect. In The Everlasting Mercy, there are some nine stanzas of almost lyric poetry which form the conclusion of the poem. These may have a poetic value, but they do not form a suitable ending for the poem. Our active interest has ended with Saul's reform.

Rosas also has a weak ending. Here Masefield offends against the logical conclusion. The reader is prepared for one ending and Masefield offers him another. Rosas is punished for his sins in the most improbable way. His vassals and noblemen leave the country even though--

(1).
"they lodged earthern like the naked worm"--

and all because of (2). "the tale of those poor lovers kept them firm". Rosas is, therefore, forced to leave the country, for there is no one left to rule.

I rather suspect that it would take more than the tale of two lovers to make the noble-men of Central America

(1) and (2). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg.445.

leave their homes to live in mountain caves. Masefield might have had the terrible Rosas assassinated,--it would have been just as easy and more probable.

Enslaved also offends against the logical. After the hero, aided by Gerard, has rescued the heroine, Amy, from the Khalif's harem only to be recaptured and sentenced to an awful death, Gerard makes a speech. He puts forth their case in a highly romantic light. The Khalif stays his hand and fits out a xebec for them. Amy, however, is not satisfied and requests the release of another "hopeless woman" from the harem to accompany them back to England; and the repentant Khalif permits her to select any woman from his harem! This ending is almost asinine in its romantic sentimentalism. What Moorish Khalif would let a galley slave after he had stolen one of the inmates of the harem live? How much influence would the fact that the service was a voluntary one for love have? Masefield should have let the Khalif kill the lovers and added one more tragedy to the list of the unfortunate love affairs of literature. Or better still, he might have let the lovers escape, even though no slave had ever succeeded in the attempt. There was no actual need for Masefield to picture the Khalif and his followers coming down the road at that particular moment; the coincidence seems unwarranted.

Daffodil Fields is another poem with an unfortunate ending. This is due to the chain of improbable incidents which form the basic plot. These events seem highly improbable and melodramatic in their development; the characters, especially Mary's, are neither logical nor consistent with their station in life. A woman

in Mary's position would not have been sentimentally true to the old sweetheart who had deserted her for the Spanish beauty of the pampas grasslands. Mary might have sent him the marked newspaper announcing her marriage to his rival, Lion, who had just returned from Brazil after vainly trying to bring the wanderer home, but if the Spanish beauty's charms were so effective, I do not think she would have let Michael return to England. Masefield describes the Spaniard thus:

(1).
" A woman whose great eyes burned,

So that he could not choose but follow where she turned."

Such a woman would not be willing for Michael to return to England to see his former sweetheart.

The most improbable is the conclusion. Michael upon his return wiles Mary away from her husband only to have her again change her mind. She feels it is her duty to return to her husband. The two men meet in the Daffodil Field. Michael is bringing Lion Mary's message and attempts to bring about a reconciliation. Through a misunderstanding a duel takes place and both are killed. Mary, the cause of it all, dies of a broken heart.

A girl of Mary's station would have felt herself bound to remain true to her husband and would have submitted unquestionably to his will especially in England. A man of Lion's commanding type would not have been foolish enough to go over the seas to look up a philandering lover, even

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 297.

though Mary was the prize. If he had though, he would not have let her go so passively to his returned rival a few weeks after the marriage. His family pride would not have permitted him to let her go without at least a struggle. Finally, Masefield describes Mary as a woman--

(1).
"Not made for lies, gentle, pure natured, thoughtful wise."

Her actions contradict her characterization. Hence, one is forced to the conclusion that Masefield's poems are not logical in their conclusion, and he fails, as in The Widow in the Bye Street and The Everlasting Mercy, to recognize the logical point for the conclusion. Though the lyric poetry with which he concludes has a certain sweetness and charm, it has little place in a poem which is narrative if it prolongs the conclusion to any great length, for the poetical ending is of little interest to the reader when the actual story is finished.

Surprise Endings

One form of conclusion which Masefield handles especially well is the surprise ending. Usually a surprise ending annoys the reader, but in Reynard the Fox it satisfies him. The reader would regret having Reynard torn to pieces by the hounds after his gallant chase. Reynard has become more than a mere fox, he is personified and symbolic, therefore, he should escape. The whole poem has been born out of the traditionary lore of the English hunt meet and

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 282.

a fox's cunning. The chase is not wasted for the hounds succeed in getting a younger fox which has not been idealized as Reynard has, and by this very clever ruse a logical ending is reached. Dogs frequently confuse the trails when hunting.

The Dauber has a surprise ending, which, though plausible, seems to be unnecessary. There is no need for Joe to be killed in The Dauber. He has become an efficient able seaman and won the approval of his captain and the mate. As he is our hero, why should he be selected as the one to fall from the "fore-top gallant yard". The clipper has all but reached her journey's end. Perhaps Masefield did it to increase the dramatic force of the poem, but the conclusion does not seem quite warranted even though it makes the poem more realistic and dramatic.

B. Setting

Masefield--the painter of words.

The vividness of Masefield's poetry is due to the accuracy of his figures of speech and treatment of setting. He creates a definite mental image or impression by comparing the unfamiliar with the familiar, thereby presenting to the reader a clear conception which is not only readily understood but clearly visualized. Because of this trait Masefield is frequently compared to the painter.

The Dauber has a description of the storm at sea which is compared to Turner's painting or the movement of Winslow Homer's ocean swell. Conrad described the sea realistically in prose but no other poet has ever pictured the sea as Masefield has, for as the Dauber says--

(1).
"It's not been done, the sea, not yet been done
From the inside, by one who really knows."

Perhaps this accounts for the realism of Masefield's sea pictures. Here is one taken from The Dauber just as the clipper is rounding the Horn.

(2).
"Out of the air a time of quiet came,
Calm fell upon the heaven like a drouth;
The brass sky watched the brassy water flame,
Drowsed as a snail the clipper loitered south
Slowly with no white bone across her mouth;
No rushing glory like a queen made bold,
The Dauber strove to draw her as she rolled.

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 212
(2). " " " " " 235

There the four leaning spires of canvas rose,
Royals and skysails lifting, gently lifting,
White like the brightness that a great fish blows
When billows are at peace and ships are drifting;
With mighty jerks that set the shadows shifting,
The courses lugged their tethers: a blue haze
Drifted like ghosts of flocks come down to graze.
There the great skyline made her perfect round
Notched now and then by the sea's deeper blue;
A smoke-smutch marked a steamer homeward bound,
The haze wrought all things to an intense hue."

In this description there is color, movement, and a distinct sensuous appeal. Who but Masefield would have been able to trace the similarity between "the blue haze" and the "flocks come down to graze?" Yet, anyone familiar with both, at once recognizes that the similarity is warranted.

Another passage which reminds one of Winslow Homer's paintings represents the sailors on board the clipper. It is vividly realistic--

(1).
"A gauntline swayed aloft
A lower topsail, hard with rope and leather,
Such as men's frozen fingers fight with oft
Below the Ramirez in Cape Horn weather.
The arms upon the yard have all together,
Lighting the head along, a thought occurred
Within the painter's brain like a light bird--

That if he drew that line of sailors' faces

(1) Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg.242.

Sweating the sail their passionate play and change

It would be new, and wonderful, and strange."

It is the long descriptions which contain the comparisons and if it were not for these descriptions or "word paintings" much of the vigor would be lost.

His shorter descriptions also present a clear, vivid picture through their brilliant figures of speech. In the calm sea we find Masefield gloring in the clipper's pride--

(1).
"Proud as a war horse snuffing battle--pawing."

Then a few verses further we find this description of the clipper and the sunset sky.

(2).
"And all the glittering from the sunset's red,

And milky colours where the bursts have been,

And then the clipper striding like a queen,

Over it all, all beauty to the crown."

Still later, the second mate describes the ship in the storm,--

(3).
"Is it cold on deck?

We're sheeted up, I tell you inches thick!

The fo'c'sle's like a wedding cake."

Who but Masefield would note the similarity between the sheathed iced canvas and the frosting on a wedding cake? Still to even the unfamiliar reader, the parallel remains a distinct mental image not easily forgotten.

Then five verses further the ice ladened ship striving against the gale is described thus:

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Page 213.
(2). " " " " " 213.
(3). " " " " " 256.

(1).

"He heard the wind go past,

Making the ship wallow as if drunk."

These are only a few of the similes which I might have selected, but they are typical and their charm rests on the comparison with the familiar homely objects.

I have selected these examples purposely from The Dauber because this poem deals with the sea and the clipper ship which is unfamiliar to most readers. Therefore, if Masefield can create the unfamiliar for his reader, because of his varied experiences, and present a picture which is mentally distinct and accurate through a strong sensuous appeal; then the setting of The Dauber alone has earned for Masefield his sobriquet of--

"Masefield--The painter of words."

Setting used as an aid to action.

The setting plays an important part, in fact, in some cases, the setting seems to be the poem and the slim narrative plot the mere excuse for being as in Right Royal. As in Hardy's Return of the Native, if one misses the description of the hedge row, he has lost the basic foundation of the novel; so in Masefield's Daffodil Fields, the influence of the daffodils upon the characters has a similar effect, for Masefield like Hardy is basically English. He pictures for us a changing England where the life of simple folk is intense and elemental and where the elemental passions of men and women who act on

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol.I. Pg.256.

impulse, who while still in youth, learn the sorrows which come to all. Indeed, many of his characters are the products of their environment and heredity, and although Gloucestershire is his home country it is of Shropshire that he writes.

The Locale Settings.

Perhaps Masefield has made a conscious effort to preserve some of the English traditionary lore in his poems, for as William Lyon Phelps says in a criticism of Masefield,--

"It seems to me that in the three poems, Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and King Cole, the first dealing with the fox chase, the second with the horse race, and the third with the travelling circus, Mr. Masefield is doing for our own time what Chaucer did for his in giving accurate and unforgettable pictures of the English countryside." (1).

There is a similarity between Reynard the Fox and The Canterbury Tales, for Masefield's treatment of the English countryside reminds one of Chaucer's descriptions.

In Reynard the Fox, the setting is used as a base for the plot, and Rural England, long famous for its hunt meet is ably described. Masefield says in his introduction to Vol. II of Collected Poems:

"I wrote Reynard the Fox partly because the events of a fox hunt have been for some centuries the deepest pleasure in English country life, and partly because the fox hunt brings together on terms of equality all sorts and conditions of English people. I felt that a fox hunt made a

(1). William Lyon Phelps-- The Advance of Poetry in the Twentieth Century.

frame in which many of the more permanent types of English character might be portrayed. The setting and outward appearance of the fox hunt are always most beautiful and its events exciting, though no doubt, these things have meant and will always mean more to the English people than to any other."

If this were his object, Masefield has succeeded, because he has portrayed something that will be a continual source of delight not only for the English but for those of other nations who are interested in hunting. He has treated the subject in such a way that it has a universal appeal and is not limited to any particular group.

It does not surprise us to have Masefield turn to such a subject after the horrors he witnessed at Gallipoli in the World War, and it is of Reynard the Fox, published in 1919, that Louis Untermeyer remarks--

(1).
"Reynard the Fox is the best of Masefield's new manner with a touch of his old vivacity." However Amy Lowell insists, "The War has hurt Mr. Masefield both in mind and spirit. He casts back pityfully and achingly upon the world he once knew and deeply loved. Reynard is really a cry of hunger for this past. A wave of nostalgic longing for the old, simple, thoughtless days of security and peace to preserve for his better comfort."

One is inclined to discredit this criticism when W. H. Hamilton says--

(2)..
"Masefield has put out nothing better than Reynard The

(1)Louis Untermeyer--Modern British Poetry.
(2)W. H. Hamilton--John Masefield--A Critical Stury.

Fox. The war has intensified his tenderness, his sympathy with all.living creatures is broadened and his beauty evolves into something stern, lovely, and intellectual. His old poems such as The Dauber, Daffodil Fields, and The Widow in the Bye Street express loneliness and a pessimistic outlook--a lack of humor--but the newer realism in Masefield's more recent work shows a zest for life and an intense joy in actual living."

Though the hunt is the real basis of the plot, Reynard becomes the real hero; Masefield follows his movements more closely than those of any other figure. He outwits man's desire through the cooperation of Nature's forces. He succeeds in jumping the hedge which the horses can't; he hides in the thicket and throws the dogs off his trail to that of a more unfortunate fox. The villagers, who have aided the hunters are ably described and the whole poem is pastoral in its description of the English countryside with its traditonary lore. It lacks, however, the characteristics of the average narrative with its highly developed incentive moments. It is evident that its success rests on the value of the locale setting which has won it its recognition.

In Right Royal there is a slight narrative plot, but it merely furnishes the poem an excuse for being; the plot really occupies a secondary place. As in Reynard the Fox, the emphasis is centered on English life. The horse race, the race track, the crowd assembled, and the tales of the individual horses occupy the foreground. It is the race which presents the main issue. Masefield must have been aware of this for he says in the introduction of Vol. II of Collected Poems, "I was

concerned mainly with the idea of the subtle relation between the horse and rider which in moments of excitement in the race, the hunt, or even the panic, make them curiously one. I was also interested in the spiritual nature of contests, in which the individual souls of the competitors must be swayed, not only by their own feelings, but by the intensely excited feelings and desires of the many thousands of partisans close by. Sometimes, in watching contests at which many thousands of spectators have been present, I have felt that the competing emotions of the partisans almost took spiritual shape and fought about the competition.

Even though Masefield carefully explains at the beginning of the poem, "The persons, horses, and events described in this poem are imaginary and no reference is made to any living person or horse," still the reader is not satisfied. The whole has been described so vividly and such a tempo has been reached that the reader feels that Masefield must have had a particular race in mind and a definite race course. He traces the progress of each of the thirty-seven horses and presents each one's personality so clearly that the reader feels the intense excitement of the steeple chase.

King Cole, the third in the series, has much literary merit. In this poem Masefield has visualized the familiar caravans and the stock circus types. Of it Mr. Masefield says in the Introduction to Vol. II of Collected Poems: "King Cole is in part a tribute to the circus, a form of

art most beautiful and moving, which I hope will never perish, though modern forms of amusements have certainly reduced the number of circuses on the English roads. Perhaps most people go to the circuses solely for the amusement which they give and for the excitement and beauty of the moving horses, but some among them must also have the feeling that the art of the circus is of a reality not common in the art of modern times. It uses the entire being of the artists. I was interested in King Cole because I lived for some years in what was said to have been his parish. Others have denied that he had anything to do with this particular parish and have given him a greater splendour than in our popular nursery rhyme. In any case, he must be a shadowy figure. Whenever I pass a little chalk hill in Berkshire, I like to think that the grove of hawthorne and brambles on the top covers the place where King Cole is buried."

Thus King Cole becomes a poetical allegory representing the kindly old soul still going about doing good and helping his fellowmen.

The poem represents the drab circus caravan wading through the soft clayey mud. The bankrupt troupe is on the point of disbanding and the animals are fatigued and starved. It has been a stormy season, and everything is wrong. The showman fortunately meets King Cole and then everything changes. Masefield describes the whole circus from a very sympathetic point of view. To him, the whole circus is a living thing; the poem is not a mere narrative--it is a plea for the circus as he practically admits in his

introduction. But it is also a vivid picture of the English countryside.

Although Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and King Cole are the three most conspicuous examples of locale found in John Masefield's poems, local color may be found in any of his longer poems. This is, of course, due to the versatility of the writer and moreover, the settings are accurately described. It seems difficult to realize that one author could write equally well on so many and varied locales.

The Dauber, more dramatic and rapid in movement, has a distinct locale. Joe leaves home to learn to paint the secrets of the sea. Unfortunately he finds this ambition is impossible to realize, but meanwhile the sea has made a man of the Dauber, and after having made him a man kills him ruthlessly. About The Dauber W. H. Hamilton writes in John Masefield, a Critical Study--

"Masefield is the greatest living artist of the sea; and the glory of it, with detail pondered on and imagined afresh, floods in deluges of beauty in short poems like Biography, Ships, The Wanderer, The River, and above all the long narrative poem The Dauber which whatever its faults is filled with the witchery and wonder, the beauty and the sorrow of the sea in all its moods of calm or storm!"

And as this is undeniably true, it would seem to make the sea the leading character in the poem and it is really the setting!

Daffodil Fields depends on its locale for the description of the wild daffodils as they bloom in the Shropshire fields. In The Everlasting Mercy, the setting does not dominate, nor is it conspicuous in The Widow in the Bye Street, for these two poems seem biographical in tone and are the result of personal experiences.

It is, of course, evident that Mr. Masefield actually knows these settings thoroughly. He paints the picture of the sea with the old time clipper, and he also attempts to preserve the pastoral England of "before the war". And it is because of this knowledge that he is able to present his material in such a way that his reader is able to know, understand and appreciate the poems.

Perhaps sufficient motivation is lacking for the characters and possibly Masefield's delineation is faulty, for if he treated his characters with the same efficacy as he does his settings, Masefield would be an undoubtedly greater poet from the angle of narrative technique. As it is, his locale settings are one of his greatest assets as a poet.

The Pathetic Fallacy.

Ruskin's theory of the "pathetic fallacy" means very little to Masefield; he ignores it. Indeed, it is possible that he never heard of it. I rather suspect Masefield would be amused if someone accused him of violating it, and would be secretly pleased if it were brought to his attention. We find Right Royal a personified horse and therefore able to talk to his master. Masefield doubtlessly

would term this-- (1). "the subtle relation between horse and rider which makes them curiously one." In The Dauber, the clipper is personified also, but this is readily forgiven because it is customary to give a ship human qualities. In The Everlasting Mercy, several inanimate objects talk supposedly together, and this is excused because it shows the author's imagination. So it is all through the poems, and one is forced to admit that though Masefield does offend against the theory it is pardonable, for it does not annoy the reader and in most cases the personification seems justified.

(2).
"Ruskin's point is that since concrete objects do not actually experience human emotions, it is a violation of artistic truth to ascribe such emotions to them. But, on the other hand, it is indubitably true that human beings habitually translate their own abstract feelings into the concrete terms of their surroundings, and therefore, in a subjective sense at least, an emotional harmony frequently does exist between the mood of a man and the aspect of his environment."

Therefore, Masefield's offense is pardonable even when viewed from the angle of good literary technique.

Emotional Harmony

Masefield is very careful on the whole to recognize the emotional harmony between the setting and the theme of

(1).Masefield--Introduction to Collected Poems-Vol. II.
(2).Clayton Hamilton--A Manual of the Art of Fiction--Pages 105-106.

the story. He makes a distinct effort to have the setting correspond with the action of the story. This is especially true of Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, King Cole, and The Dauber. There are a few exceptions and these are found in sections of The Everlasting Mercy, Daffodil Fields, and The Widow in the Bye Street.

In The Everlasting Mercy, for example, Saul Kane is so disturbed by the quiet calm of the sleeping town when contrasted with the unrest in his own soul that he proceeds to wake everyone up with the fire bell. Masefield thereby finally achieves emotional harmony. The Widow in the Bye Street has a definite contrast, for the day, when Jimmy is hanged, seems to present a distinct contrast which is clearly defined.

(1).

"The warders watched, the little larks were singing,
A plough team jangled, turning at the rist,
Beyond, the mild Cathedral bells were ringing,
The elm tree rooks were cawing at the spring time,
O beauty of the time when winter's done,
And all the fields are laughing at the sun."

But Masefield returns to emotional harmony when the sorrowing mother mourns for her son.

In Daffodil Fields, the concluding scene is a duel which takes place in the lovely fragrant field of daffodils; but Mary sits unmindful of Nature's beauties by the side of her dead husband and the lover who has betrayed her trust.

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Page 204.

Although in the concluding scene of The Everlasting Mercy, Reynard the Fox, The Widow in the Bye Street, Right Royal, The Dauber, and King Cole an emotional harmony is reached, Masefield does not follow any hard and fast rule. He builds up dramatic climaxes and thereby appeals to our emotions.

Realistic not Romantic.

From his treatment of the emotional harmony of the setting with the theme one might conclude that Masefield is romantic in his treatment of setting, but this is not true, for there is a stern reality about the whole scene which convinces the reader that it is not only a typical scene but has verisimilitude as well.

Cornelius Weygaudt says in his Pennsylvania University Lectures: "At times his workmanship is at fault, in the effort of realism he not only eschews poetry entirely, but leaves his lines, and one cannot help feeling as they came to him, believing further consideration would result in a finish too fine for the poem. If such were his motives for the roughness here and there, it is hardly well taken, for at the close of these poems he writes in the diction that English poetry has had from Milton's day to ours."

Something of this Masefield admits in the beginning of his introduction to Vol. I. of Collected Poems, for he says: "It seems as though the minds of men always follow one of two purposes in art, for some two generations at a time. Either they strive towards a great elaboration of artifice or for a greater closeness to reality. The main art of the

world is created in one or the other endeavor--great work has been produced by both schools. The masters of the one school will admire the art and scopes of the masters in the other. No artist can say truthfully that one school is better or finer or more beautiful than the other.

"In England these two schools have always existed. There is the native school, which has qualities of character, drawing, humor, liveliness, and truth; there is another school, not native but imported by those who have striven to correct, by foreign examples of good taste, the simplicity or rusticity of the native school."

Masefield then proceeds to talk about the influence of Tennyson and the artifices employed to attain certain ends by his imitators, and finally says: "These imitators often proclaimed that in the works of Tennyson, poetry had uttered its last word and that nothing more remained to be said by the poets writing English. This proclamation, often repeated, came in time to be believed by many who cared more for the respectability than for the adventures of the mind. It also roused a reaction.

"Among men, who recognized the beauty of much of Tennyson's poetry, there were many who yet felt that poetry had not said her last word and that if nothing better at least something different could be done."

This rather clearly proclaims Masefield's purpose in writing and singles him out as a realist. He feels that Tennyson's rhymes are superficial;the idea has been sacrificed for the rhyme. Later in a criticism of the school of

realists to which he belongs he says: "Often their work has been harsh, violent, and ill-considered; too generally it has been read instead of spoken, but whatever their faults and shortcomings, these poets have been in the school of life instead of the school of artifice."

Here Masefield reminds us once again that he has actually seen what he describes. It conclusively proves that Masefield is a realist in the choice of his material, plot, and setting, but a romanticist in his treatment of the idealism he expresses.

C. Characters.

General Delineation of Characters.

I have already mentioned Masefield's characterizations and shown the influence of the setting upon them--in fact the two are not easily separated. His characters belong to well defined types and to each Masefield gives an individual treatment; moreover, by his clear descriptions he gives them life. The men and women which Masefield has created are universal in their appeal, and have enough individual traits to make them human. Many authors and painters have been able to present the type but have failed to make the types representative of the class depicted. One well-known example which clearly illustrates my meaning is selected from Goodyear's Renaissance and Modern Art.

Jules Breton's peasants when contrasted with those of Jean Millet fail to convince the casual observer. Breton failed to make his peasants true to type--they are really princesses disguised as peasants. The peasant girl in The Song of the Lark does not impress us as genuine, but Jean Millet's The Gleaners represents not only peasants, but peasants whose very attitude conveys their meagre life. It is readily apparent that Breton is of the court while Millet is of the country. Millet painted that which he understood and Breton did not.

To take an example from literature, Tennyson has made his characters representative but he has failed to make them individual. It would be impossible to recognize them as actual men and women. Elaine is thus described in

Lancelot and Elaine--

"Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat."

Actually the reader knows very little about Elaine's outward appearance; he only knows the type she represents. Masefield like Millet makes his peasants and noblemen actual people whom we could recognize through an individual trait. This is true of not only his major characters, but his minor as well.

Presentation of Characters.

Saul Kane is one the best defined major characters. He is ably described in the stanzas summarizing his childhood which serve as the introduction to the poem. The character of the Widow in The Widow in the Bye Street is a close second. In this poem the first part is given over entirely to a description of the four characters for whom fate has set the "chessboard". These are the four active characters; the other individuals are merely grouped in the background. Of the four major characters two only are important--the widow, and Anna--the men are merely foils.

The character of the widow is based on the old proverb which I quote directly from the poem and from these verses her character may be analyzed; incidentally they furnish the fundamental theme for the poem.

(1).
"The mother's daily fear of what would come,

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 149.

When woman and her lovely boy should meet,
When the new wife would break up the old home."

With this thought the widow directly influences Jimmy against all the village girls until they meet Anna at the fair, and Anna is looking for an easy victim. Her motive is jealousy. She has found that her admirer, Ern, who has become impatient because she was late, toying with a gypsy girl. When they laugh at her, she becomes angry and at once plans to retaliate. Jimmy, therefore, becomes her prey, for Anna sees her opportunity to make Ern jealous and plays her cards shrewdly.

(1).
"The woman's maxim, 'Win the mother first',
Made her be gracious to the withered thing."

Poor Jimmy's condition is described thus:

(2).
"We have to hurry at the touch of fate;
When Life knocks at the door no one can wait,
When Death makes his arrest we have to go
And so with Love, and Jimmy found it so."

Masefield in a few verses describes his major characters. It is not necessary for him to go into a detailed description, for in a few verses he can give an adequate picture which clearly presents the type. As in the above quotation, Anna's skill is shown indirectly through her attitude towards Jimmy's mother and directly by describing her effect on Jimmy. For the first time his mother has allowed him to speak to a woman and love

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 157.
(2). " " " " " 156.

has entered his soul--from now on it will be a struggle between the two women. We know Anna is not actually interested in Jimmy, save to make her shepherd lover jealous, and we also know Jimmy is actually in love with Anna. It is not difficult to guess the conclusion. Yet, Masefield has accomplished this effect with a few verses.

The minor characters are also presented as distinct types with individual personalities. From Reynard the Fox I have selected the description of Old Bennett.

(1).
"Just like an axe head on its helve,
Old Bennett sat and watched the gathering.
He'd given many a man a lathering
In field or barn and woman too.
His cold eye reached a woman through
With comment, men with scorn.
He hated all within his grasp,
For he was minded like an asp
That strikes whatever is not dust."

Rather a complete and adequate description--we would recognize Old Bennett if we were to meet him. Not only has Masefield described his appearance but also his disposition and his code of ethics. Here is another taken from the same poem describing the parson's sporting wife:

(2).
"She was a stout one, full of life,
With red, quick, kindly, manly face,

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. II. Pg. 11
(2). " " " Vol. II. Pg. 8

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She held the knave, queen, king, and ace,
With every hand she played with men.
She was no sister to the hen,
But fierce and minded to be queen.
She wore a coat and skirt of green,
A waistcoat out of hunting red,
Her tie pin was a fox's head."

Her sporting type is easily recognized. Thus Masefield describes her husband--

(1).
"He loved the sound of his own voice,
His talk was like the charge of horse."

But Masefield can completely characterize an individual in a single verse by a figure of speech. Here is one which is not only ironic but a rather terrible criticism of an individual.

(2).
"His loose mouth opened like a gate."

From Right Royal I select this characterization of a distinct type.

(3).
"Dick Cappell came from a London Mews,
His fleshless face was a stretcht skin sheath
For the narrow pear of a skull beneath.
He had cold blue eyes, and a mouth like a slit,
With yellow teeth sticking out of it.
There was no red blood in his lips of skin
Hid a sinister hard, sharp soul within.

(1).Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. II. Pg. 8
(2). " " " " Pg. 5
(3). " " " " Pg.180

Perhaps the thing that he most enjoyed

Was being rude when he felt annoyed."

He is a type we are willing to read about but dislike to meet; it is a type, however, which is always seen at the fairs and races.

So it is throughout the poems; each character becomes a distinct personality, and it is moreover a representative personality of the given type. Such characters, whether they be major or minor, are not easily forgotten, for they are universal in their appeal.

Dialogue.

One thing which aids Masefield in the development of his characters is the dialogue. He has plenty of opportunity to use dialect, but even though he never quite uses it, the impression of the locale is conveyed. Evidently he agrees with Thomas when he says: (1). "The dialect stories do not depend so much upon the distortion of spelling, for their effects as on the use of idioms and characteristic colloquial expressions."

While reading Masefield, one is impressed with the effect of his conversation. The speeches follow in direct order to given cues. In fact, at times one might almost think he was reading a drama, and some of Masefield's poems resemble the"closet drama" of Browning. Of course, this adds to the dramatic effect of the poem, but

(1). Thomas Manchester and Scott--Composition for College Students--Pg. 395.

it takes away a certain poetical atmosphere. Although this dramatic effect was first used in The Widow in the Bye Street, it seems to be typical of his later narrative poems, especially Right Royal and King Cole. The change of style annoys the reader, but the speeches themselves are typical and slightly idiomatic but nevertheless true of the type presented.

Kinetic Characters

The male characters on the whole impress one as being kinetic or developing characters. Saul Kane passes abruptly from the rake to the reformer. The Dauber develops from youth to manhood. Rosas matures from the headstrong boy to the brutal king and father. Jimmy breaks loose from his"mother's apron strings" and literally meets his fate. These are all Kinetic characters whose development has been forecasted in the introduction of the poem.

Of all those which I have mentioned Rosas is the best for purposes of analysis.

When the reader is first introduced to Rosas, he is merely told that the child is headstrong and his grandfather has prophesied the future. That concludes the prelude. Rosas' first step is a revolt; he overthrows his mother's parental authority and leaves home. We next find him lauded as the hero by the lawless gauchos. Through a Civil War, Rosas is given Power for he is made King of the Reds and the Whites. Not content, Rosas strives for the one thing which he is denied--spiritual power. He fears the ecclesiastical power of the church and forces the priests to canonize him. Rosas is now not only a temporal

King but a spiritual God. This, of course, brings about the Decay of Power, and as OldAge overtakes him, he experiences Loneliness and Defeat. As a character, he assumes an almost allegorical significance but this does not impress one until he analyzes the poem. Rosas is virile and, as a developing character, is most interesting.

Very few, if any, of Masefield's female characters can be considered Kinetic.

Mary, the possible exception in The Daffodil Fields, has only one claim to being a Kinetic character, though she might well be considered entirely static. This one claim is her inability to make up her mind, but as she succeeds in ruining two good men, it would seem as though she were active enough. In a way, she reminds one of Ruth in Eugene O'Neil's Beyond the Horizon. Ruth likewise did not know what she wanted!

Static Characters.

As I have said, almost all of Masefield's female characters are static; they are not developing figures. On the whole, they do not seem to be life-like. Aside from the character of the widow, there is only one who convinces the reader as being real flesh and blood. That character is Mrs. Jaggard in The Everlasting Mercy. She is real, but after all, she does not develop, for she is only a minor character. It is her attitude which is natural and her speech which is typical that makes her interesting.

The character of Miss Bourne, the Friend, in The Everlasting Mercy is second in rank. The difficulty which she presents is of plausibility. Would a woman of her type be apt to visit the dives after the curfew had rung in order to send the belated sots home? And if she did visit them, would she be able to reform a notorious character like Saul Kane by sheer hypnotism?

It is said, "Robert Louis Stevenson once remarked that whenever, in a story by a friend of his, he came upon a passage that was notably untrue he always suspected that it had been transcribed directly from actual life. The author had been too sure of the facts to ask himself in what way they were representative of the general laws of life. But facts are important to the careful thinker only as they are significant of truth." (1). This may be true of Masefield's poem. The poet may have known of such a case, but this incident would not occur often enough to make it universally true, and therefore, the scene cannot be accepted without at least a question.

Sentimentalism.

Masefield's men are so virile that it seems unfortunate that his female characters are so weak. This is caused by a distinct trace of sentimentalism. The women are adequately described, but they fail to act consistently; and the character of Mary in The Daffodil Fields is an outstanding example.

(1). Clayton Hamilton--A Manual of the Art of Fiction Pg.16.

Another example of sentimentalism is found in The Widow in the Bye Street. The mother dominates her son and expects to fill his life completely, but she is finally disappointed, for he shakes off the parental authority and leaves her lonely, forgetting her former sacrifices in the transitory sunshine of Anna's sweet smile. Then, in what Cornelius Weygaudt refers to as having (1). "the clarity and dignity of the poetry found in only the greatest threnodies and reminiscent of Arnold's Scholar Gypsy, or Lycidas, or Macbeth's comment on Duncan," comes the stanzas which he terms the best of the whole poem. In these three stanzas Masefield pathetically describes the widow as she sings "Binger" all alone mourning for her son.

(2).
"Singing her song the crazy mother goes,
Singing as though her heart were full of peace
Moths knock the petals from the dropping rose,
Stars make the glimmering pool a golden fleece,
The moon drops west, but still she does not cease,
The mice peep out to hear her sing,
Until the inn-man's cockerel shakes his wing.

And in the sunny dawns of hot July,
The labourers going to the meadows see her there.
Rubbing the sleep out of their heavy eyes,
They lean upon the parapet to stare;
They see her plaiting basil in her hair,

(1). Cornelius Weygaudt--University of Pennsylvania Lectures.
(2). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg.208-209.

Basil, the dark red wound-wort cops of clover,
The blue self-heal and golden Jacks of Dover.

Dully they watch her, then they turn to go
To that high Shropshire upland of late hay,
Her singing lingers with them as they mow,
And many times they try it, now grave, now gay,
Till, with full throat, over the hills away,
They lift it clear; oh, very clear it towers,
Mixed with the swish of many falling flowers."

Cornelius Weygaudt may be correct, but the reader is not interested in the mother at this point of the story. His chief interest ends when Jimmy is hanged, and he skims through these verses failing to appreciate their beauty as poetry. This is, therefore, not a suitable conclusion for the poem, and it verges upon bathos in its sentimental outlook.

In Enslaved, Amy is made to appear in a very sentimental light. It is fortunate for her and her lover that the Khalif is a gentleman and not of the same brutal type as Rosas who would have been infuriated by Gerard's plea.

Direct Delineation.

Masefield is prone to describe his characters by presenting them directly to his reader. The Dauber tells his story to the reefer by means of an exposition which covers his boyhood story very carefully. The characters in The Everlasting Mercy and Daffodil Fields are described directly to the reader.

Another means of presentation of characters is to introduce the characters by explaining their eccentricities. This is especially true of the groups which are found in Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and King Cole. Kane's own speeches give us a clear insight into his character.

In Reynard the Fox, and The Everlasting Mercy, Masefield uses still another method, portrayal by action, thereby building up a series of evidencewhich furnishes the entire characterization. A typical example is Saul Kane's sharing his filched pear with little Jimmy Jaggard and and telling him the story of Tom Cat's adventures.

But on the whole Masefield seems to prefer to let the reader draw his own conclusions.

Indirect Delineation.

Masefield presents most of his characters indirectly to the reader. He sometimes does it through the reports of other characters. An example of this is found in The Widow in the Bye Street. The loungers describe in a matter-of-fact way to the mother the story of her son's encounter, for they serve as the recorders of his movements.

By far the most interesting of Masefield's methods of character portrayal is shown by the effect of one character upon the other. When we are first introduced to the Dauber we are told that all the sailors are by and chatting together: (1).
"But no one went across to talk to him and all hands called him Dauber and despised him." But after the Dauber has conquered self the Mate says approvingly,--

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 211.

(1).

"On deck the first, why holy sailor, Dauber,

You're a man! I took you for a soldier."

The sailors and the sea have changed Joe's entire personality and developed the hidden traits. Joe has conquered self.

Anna's influence upon the unformed character of Jimmy is interesting in its development. It is also probable, for Jimmy has had no previous experiences, and when one is stiffly suppressed, he is like wax in the hands of a woman of Anna's type.

Mrs. Jaggard's effect upon Saul Kane, the union between Right Royal and his master, and Michael's influence upon Mary are other outstanding examples of the influence of one character upon another.

Influence of Environment.

The influence of environment upon the characters is conspicuous. As is true of Hardy's characters, Masefield's characters are the product of their enrironment. This is especially true of The Daffodil Fields. They serve to bring out a dull harmony which accords with the theme of the poem and influences the lives of the characters. Mary is, therefore, the result of her environment and heredity.

The same might be said of the Dauber who leaves his home to follow the sea, or of Rosas whose mother has made possible the fulfillment of the grandfather's prophecy. These characters are the result of their environment and

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I. Pg. 258.

their heredity; therefore, they have become victims in Life's Tragedy.

King Cole--an Allegorical Character.

As I have already stated, King Cole is a poetical allegory representing the kindly old soul still going about doing good for his fellow men. Masefield has a difficult task to present this character in an active way to his readers so that they will accept him as the "deux ex machina" of the poem. He does it rather skillfully, for he presents him to his reader by means of a careful description which first accounts for the old showman's presence in the world, secondly explains his power to aid the troubled, and finally describes him directly. The poem opens with the description of King Cole.

(1).

"King Cole was King before the trouble came,
The land was happy when he held the helm,
The valley land from Condicote to Thane,
Watered by Thames and green with many an elm,
For many a year he governed well his realm
So well-beloved, that when at last he died,
It was a bereavement to the countryside.

So good, so well-beloved, had he been
In life, that when he reached the judging place
There where the scales are even, the sword keen,
The Acquitting Judges granted him a grace,

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. II. Pg. 231.

Aught he might choose, red, black, from king to ace
Beneath the bright arch of Heaven's span,
He chose to wander earth, the friend of man.

So since that time, he wanders shore and shire
An old, poor, wandering man, with glittering eyes
Helping distressful folk to their desires
By power of the spirit that within him lies,
Gentle he is, and quiet, and most wise,
He wears a ragged grey, he sings sweet words,
And where he walks there flutter little birds."

By this means Masefield succeeds in making him real, and as (1). "it is only when allegorical characters are virtually conceived as individuals, instead of mere abstractions, that they touch the heart." King Cole becomes accepted as a character who, though unique, is real.

Character Group Background.

On the whole Masefield confines himself to a very few characters. Often one leading character, as in The Everlasting Mercy and King Cole, furnishes the main interest. Rarely are there more than four important characters, but grouped artistically in the background is the crowd. This is especially true of Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and King Cole. Although Reynard is the main character, the hunters compose the colorful background and furnish the main interest. In Right Royal, it is much the same; the characters only furnish a picturesque group of interested spectators

(1).Clayton Hamilton--A Manual of the Art of Fiction. Page 81.

for the race. King Cole is based on the old familiar circus and the characters glance to and fro from the background to the foreground as their turn comes, for the whole circus is treated as one.

These three poems remind one of the pagentry of the Chinese tapestry which tells its story as it is unrolled by means of a series of individual yet related pictures.

D. Point of View

Variable approach

One thing which is especially interesting from the angle of Narrative Technique is Masefield's treatment of the Point of View. While he seems on the whole to prefer the third person, he changes his point of view readily to suit the scene, character, or plot.

The Internal Point of View

The Everlasting Mercy is told almost entirely from the hero's point of view. Saul Kane gives us a very impersonal account of his dissolute boyhood and then proceeds with the story of the unjustified boxing match, his subsequent debauch at the Lion, the ringing of the fire bells, his encounter with the parson, the second night's escapades, and the dawn of the new day which brings his reformation. This is told in the first person, but although the story is told from Saul's viewpoint and in his own diction, still there are passages of pure descriptive poetry which are beyond the ken of Saul's conception and reflect the author's personality.

(1).
"Such violations of the hard terms of actuality are justified by literary conventions; and that if the gain in vividness be great enough the reader will be willing to concede first, that the story shall be told by the leading actor, regardless of the motive and second, that he shall be granted the requisite mastery of narrative." The whole

(1). Clayton Hamilton--A Manual of the Art of Fiction--Pg.124

achieves vividness, plausibility, and realism, and Masefield thus succeeds in giving the poems a distinct unity. Enslaved is also told in the first person but the effect is not as satisfactory as that of The Everlasting Mercy.

The Widow in the Bye Street is told from the angle of the various characters, each one tells his share of the story.

In the third part of The Dauber, the past action is told by the young seaman, and therefore, is told from the internal angle; but the rest of the poem is told from the external point of view.

The External Point of View

In Reynard the Fox the point of view becomes omniscient. At one point Masefield tells the hunter's story and thoughts, then again he is with the villagers who help direct the chase, but mainly the story is told from Reynard's viewpoint.

Masefield uses the limited point of view in Daffodil Fields, for we do not know Mary's attitude even though that of the two men is apparent from the first. This, of course, adds suspense to the story.

The author likes to tell his own story and usually uses the third person. He acts as a reporter who describes his characters by their appearance, their actions, and their mental reactions. This is the point of view used in The Dauber, King Cole, Rosas, and Reynard the Fox, and this style seems singularly adapted to Masefield's narrative technique.

Masefield's Tone Personal

Masefield likes his characters and is decidedly personal in his treatment of them. To him they seem alive. He describes them with so much vigor that the reader is able to grasp the author's mental image and make it his own. It gives a personal tone to the narrative and convinces the reader of its vitality.

(1).
"The author who writes personally does not hesitate to reveal, nor even to express directly, his admiration of the character's merits or his depreciation of a character's defects. There is a certain salutary humanness about an author who loves or hates his characters just as he would love or hate the same sort of people in actual life, and writes about them with the glow of personal emotion."

It is this personal quality which gives an added charm to Masefield's narrations.

(1). Clayton Hamilton--A Manual of the Art of Fiction--Pg.135-36

E. Masefield's Poetical Technique

Style

Perhaps Masefield's greatest charm is found in his descriptive Power and Style. He seems to create by his vigorous spontaneity a new influence in the field of poetry. The poet achieves emphasis by means of climatic suspense and pauses. Frequently he inserts passages of poetic beauty which retard the plot, as in The Everlasting Mercy or The Dauber, but the reader readily forgives him because the poet's personality is pleasing and his style is vivid and forceful.

There is a tendency for Masefield to neglect to revise or reorganize his work. This fault Masefield practically admits when he voices his disapproval of "the school of artifice" in the Introduction to Vol. I of his Collected Poems. His rhyming is at times faulty and one might almost accuse him of using words because they rhyme. Although there are several examples in various passages which I have quoted, the outstanding example is found in Rosas.

(1).

"Then he got strength and skill till all men there,
Even the Indians spoke of him as fey,
He beat the unbacked stallion from his mare,
And mounted him and made the beast obey."

The use of "fey" is impossible. With no stretch of the imagination can such a man as Rosas be spoken of as a fairy even to make the verses rhyme. Such an error Masefield would have realized had he revised his work. Similar

(1). Masefield--Collected Poems--Vol. I-Pg. 429

examples can be found in all his poems. Undoubtedly his poems would be greater from a poetical and technical standpoint if he had revised his work more. But Masefield was afraid that he might, like Tennyson, be accused of employing artifice; so he let his work remain as originally written.

There is a marked improvement in Mid-Summer Night and Other Tales, (1928). In these poems the meter is more refined and the work shows signs of revision. This collection contains short narrative poems which are based on some of the less familiar of the Arthurian ledgends. The volume reminds one of Tennyson's shorter Idylls of the King. Unfortunately a certain spontaneity, which is present in Masefield's earlier poems, is lacking. This is either due to the triteness of the subject or to the effort at revision.

Masefield's Technique

Masefield's poems may be read at one sitting and their dramatic appeal fastens them in the reader's memory, for Masefield appeals to the senses and not to the reason primarily. The stories as plotted structures seem of minor importance, for it is the setting and the characterizations with the rapidity of his rhythms and the freshness of his treatment which delight the reader.

Masefield has a distinct literary technique which at times seems hampered by the poetical restrictions. He accepts all save one of the imagist principles and refuses to develop new rhythms preferring to use the traditional verse forms. His poetry contains much which is universal, for it is on the whole "simple, sensuous, and passionate."

His poetical theory Miss Sullivan sums up in The Realism in the Poetry of John Masefield, as the theory evolved in Wordworth's preface to his Lyrical Ballads.

"The principal object then proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect, and further, above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing them truly, though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature; chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language, because in that condition of our life elementary feeling co-exists in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, maybe more accurately contemplated and more forcibly communicated, because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupation are more easily comprehended and are more durable; and lastly because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."

This seems a fitting criticism of Masefield's narrative poems, for when he was asked the guiding motive in his writing he said:

"I desire to interpret life both by reflecting it as it appears and by portraying its outcome. Great art must contain these two attributes. Examine anyone of the dramas of Shakespeare and you will find that this action is the result of a destruction of the balance in the beginning. It is like a cartful of apples which is overturned. All the apples are spilled in the street. But you will notice that Shakespeare piles them up again in his incomparable manner. Many may be bruised, broken, anda few lost: but that is life."

And it is because of his interpretation of life that Masefield will be given an important place among the twentieth century authors by the coming generation for his appeal is universal.

IV - Conclusion

In this dissertation - The Narrative Technique of John Masefield's Longer Poems - I have shown that Masefield is a very versatile writer, and as a poet, has many claims to distinction. As a narrative poet, he is probably the greatest that the twentieth century has yet produced. He has made a distinct mark on all the poetical literature of his time and although his poetry lacks the polish of the older poets, he shows their influence in his style. But Masefield is a distinct individualist, and while he is undoubtedly influenced by Hardy, Chaucer, and Tennyson, still he has preserved his own descriptive power and style unhampered by the restrictions of others. Many future poets will attempt to copy his style, his figures of speech, and his realistic settings, but they will lack his individuality and universality.

Technical rules mean very little to Masefield, for he has an individual narrative technique. He prefers to branch out into the newer fields and in many ways he is the product of his age. His poetry reflects his varied life, and though at times he may err in a technical way, he pictures that phase of life which is ever new. He has made narrative poetry out of the very material which has refused to yield its fruits to other poets who lacked this master's touch. Masefield has painted the sea with a masterly hand, and has pictured the tranquil English countryside for his reader. Moreover, Masefield has created narrative poems which live

and breathe and contain enough universal truths to insure them a permanent and conspicuous place in the twentieth century literature.

I have proved that although Masefield is a realist in his selection of material, his treatment is romantic, for he seems to hold out the eternal hope of salvation to his characters.

From the angle of narrative technique The Everlasting Mercy and The Dauber are his best poems and in many ways they seem like short stories for they have a well sustained plot, and adequate descriptive setting, and characters who on the whole act consistently. Although certain poems are important for other qualities, these two poems conform the closest with the rules of good narrative technique.

Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and Daffodil Fields might be termed his locale poems, for their background is Masefield's beloved Shropshire.

Reynard the Fox, Right Royal, and King Cole resemble a beautiful tapestry of the English countryside, but in form they seem to be essay rather than of narrative structure. Their characterizations and settings are narrative. Reynard the Fox, because of its setting and characterizations, is in some respects one of the best of Masefield's narrative poems. King Cole has much literary merit but is a poetical allegory in form.

Although his poems are founded on a slim narrative plot, yet they excel in the character portrayal and the development of his locale settings.

Masefield's characters are well depicted, but even though they are well drawn, they fail in many cases to assume an active role in the poem. Masefield's men are vigorous and active. They seem real flesh and blood as they move about, live and love, and struggle with their difficulties. His women are not as well portrayed. This is due in part to their sentimental treatment. The characters on the whole lack sufficient motivation because the plot is slight and does not furnish them enough incentive for action.

Masefield's greatest fault as a narrative poet is his failure to recognize the logical ending for his poems. He is apt to prolong the conclusion by adding stanzas of lyric poetry which at times wearies the reader, for his active interest has ended with the story of the poem. He also has the tendency to insert philosophical remarks which delay the action of the story at the most dramatic moments.

Masefield on the whole is a very dramatic poet - it seems to be natural for him to tell the story from a dramatic point of view. At times he even writes his narrative poems in dramatic form. He also achieves a dramatic effect by using dramatic foreshadowing, and in this way he obtains emphasis and creates suspense.

It is Masefield's characters, settings, and literary technique which assure him a conspicuous place among our twentieth century writers. Masefield's desire is to interpret life among the simpler groups so that he can reveal the mental struggle of his characters against the elemental forces of nature and society's code. This does not mean that Masefield's poems are moralistic or didactic; it means that

each one either directly or indirectly teaches a lesson which is founded on one of society's commandments. For as he says in The Everlasting Mercy:

(1).

"Each one has been a little child,
A little child with laughing look,
A lovely white unwritten book,
A book that God will take my friend,
As each goes out at journey's end.
The Lord who gave us Earth and Heaven,
Takes that as thanks for what He's given,
The book he lent is given back
All blotted red and smutted black."

(1). Collected Poems - Vol. I - Pg. 56.

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